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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventy-third year

Identical letters dated 3 April 2018 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

I am writing to you to reiterate our urgent appeals for all possible measures to be taken by the international community to provide immediate protection to the Palestinian civilian population throughout the entire Occupied State of Palestine, especially in the besieged Gaza Strip, from repeated military aggression and attacks perpetuated by Israel, the occupying Power. Israel's latest crimes against Palestinian peaceful demonstrators that took place this past Friday, 30 March 2018, are a tragic reminder of the urgency of international action to provide such protection.

It is undeniable that a historic lack of accountability has fostered Israel's belief that it is above the law and will suffer no consequences for any of its crimes against the Palestinian people it holds hostage under its occupation. Because of this impunity, 18 more Palestinians were killed by the occupying Power this past Friday and more than 1,500 others were wounded, including more than 750 from live ammunition and 148 from rubber-coated steel bullets.

The Palestinians who were killed or injured were exercising their right to peaceful protest, by taking part in the first day of a six-week-long peaceful campaign called the "Great return march". Before, during and after the protests, the organizers of the campaign had clearly expressed the peaceful nature of the protests, which were intended to raise international awareness about Israel's illegal, inhumane and immoral 10-year blockade of the Gaza Strip, and to support Palestine refugees' legitimate right of return. However, the occupying Power had once again, in a premeditated manner, adopted a shoot-to-kill policy.

Videos and photos posted online display Israeli snipers shooting Palestinians at will. For example, one video showed 19-year-old Abdel Fattah Abd al-Nabi being shot in the back as he ran from the gunfire of snipers carrying only a tyre. A second video emerged showing a woman who was waving a Palestinian flag being shot in the leg. A third video showed a man being shot in the leg as he was standing up after completing his afternoon prayers. These are just three tragic examples of civilians

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killed or injured in cold blood this past Friday. As Gideon Levy, an Israeli columnist for *Haaretz*, wrote: "By nightfall the body count had reached at least 15, all of them by live fire, with more than 750 wounded. Tanks and sharpshooters against unarmed civilians. That's called a massacre. There's no other word for it."

In a press statement on Friday, 30 March 2018, Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem stated: "Shooting at unarmed demonstrators is illegal and any command allowing such an action is manifestly illegal". It also stated that "armed soldiers and unarmed demonstrators are not 'at war'" and that "the illegal open fire regulations and the compliance with them are the reason for the number of dead and injured today in the Gaza Strip". Other prominent international human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, also denounced the conduct of the Israeli occupying forces. On the other side of the spectrum, Israeli officials took to news media outlets and social media, shamefully, to praise the killing of Palestinians by its occupying forces. The Israeli Prime Minister released a statement "thanking" the occupying forces for "guarding the country's borders" and allowing "Israeli citizens to celebrate the [Passover] holiday peacefully", demonstrating once again his blatant disregard for Palestinians' life and international law. The Israeli Foreign Ministry continued its incitement against the Palestinian people by issuing a statement that "the border fence between Israel and the Gaza Strip separates a sovereign state and a terrorist organization." Yesterday, those criminal sentiments were reconfirmed through provocative statements made by the Israeli Government and party officials, including by the spokesperson of the Likud party, who stated that the thousands of Palestinians demonstrating in Gaza were "legitimate targets".

At the same time, in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the occupying Power continues its aggression against the civilian population. Yesterday, peaceful and non-violent demonstrations were held to protest against Israel's killing of Palestinians in Gaza. As is the norm, Israeli occupying forces responded to non-violent Palestinian actions with violence, firing stun grenades, tear gas canisters, rubber-coated steel bullets and even live ammunition at civilian protesters, causing dozens of injuries. In this connection, more than 98 Palestinians were injured after occupying forces attacked protesters in front of Al-Quds University in Abu Dis in occupied East Jerusalem. Two of the wounded Palestinians were shot in the head and one in the chest. The Palestinian Red Crescent Society stated that 87 Palestinians were treated for tear gas inhalation and five for burns from Israeli gas bombs and concussion grenades. A number of them had to be transferred to hospitals for further treatment. Moreover, today, Monday, 2 April 2018, Israeli so-called police kidnapped and detained six Palestinian minors after raiding their homes in occupied East Jerusalem.

Also in occupied East Jerusalem, hundreds of illegal Israeli settlers, protected by Israeli so-called police and occupying forces, stormed the courtyards of the Aqsa Mosque compound to mark the third day of the Jewish Passover holiday, carrying out provocative tours in the mosque's courtyards. Members of the so-called "Temple Mount" movement have been publicly calling its followers to participate in wide-scale mass raids on the holy site. We call once again for the cessation of all provocations and incitement regarding the Aqsa Mosque compound and respect for the sanctity of this holy site. Israel, the occupying Power, must respect the historic status quo at this sacred site and cease all actions that inflame the situation and risk exacerbating heightened religious sensitivities, with potentially grave consequences.

This immoral, unconscionable situation cannot continue. The international community can no longer stand by while the occupying Power commits grave breaches of international law, including humanitarian law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention, and human rights law, that amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity and that inflict trauma, terror, death and destruction on the

defenceless Palestinian people. Israel must be held accountable. Therefore, we fully support the call by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, echoed by many States and organizations around the world, for an independent and transparent investigation into the killing by Israel of Palestinian civilians taking part in the peaceful protests. Moreover, we underscore the international legal obligation to ensure the protection of civilians, for this obligation has not only been abdicated by Israel, the occupying Power, but it is being intentionally, grossly and systematically violated as Israel continues its military attacks and its use of force against civilians in Occupied Palestine, particularly in the Gaza Strip, exhibiting a cruel disregard for human life. To remain silent in the face of such grave breaches of international law is unacceptable and will only bolster Israel's impunity and, as the world witnessed this past Friday, allow the further loss of innocent human life.

This letter is in follow-up to our 628 previous letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. Those letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 30 March 2018 (A/ES-10/773-S/2018/180) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the
State of Palestine to the United Nations